

Peace Sunday Worship Resources 2009



Peace Sunday

Peace Sunday is celebrated on the nearest Sunday to Hiroshima Day (August 6). This year the appropriate Sunday falls closest to Nagasaki Day (August 9) and so we invite you to remember the victims of the bombing of Nagasaki. Images and testimony can be found on the internet. We also ask you to remember the workers and families who are suffering the consequences of nuclear testing in French Polynesia. This year CWS is supporting the Global March for Peace and Nonviolence with its call to end the production and use of nuclear weapons and eliminate violence. It will begin on October 2 in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Nagasaki Day

At 11.02 am on August 9, 1945 the United States detonated its second atomic bomb codenamed "Fat Man" on Nagasaki, Japan, three days after the one on Hiroshima. The bomb was dropped by parachute and exploded 500 metres above the ground. Almost 30 percent of Nagasaki was destroyed and 74,000 people killed. A similar number were injured and its citizens have continued to live with the after-effects of the nuclear fallout. The city has committed itself to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons and 'for the achievement of universal everlasting peace'.



Justice for Moruroa workers

France conducted its first nuclear test on tiny Moruroa Atoll on July 2, 1966. It was followed by another 45 tests on Moruroa and the neighbouring Fangataufa atoll plus 147 underground tests. The testing finally ended 30 years later but the Maohi people of French Polynesia continue to suffer the consequences.

The survivors of the test programme have suffered considerably. Many have died or developed cancers because of their exposure to radiation and nuclear fallout. Significant numbers of their descendents have been born with deformities, developed cancers or even died. Considerable ecological and geological damage to the atolls has occurred, with a much greater incidence of ciguatera, a disease caused by eating contaminated fish. The history of testing also reinforced the role of the French government in the islands leaving a bitter legacy of division and injustice.

In an effort to gain compensation for those who had suffered from the years of testing, former workers joined together as Moruroa e Tatou (Moruroa and Us) in July 2001. Today this association has over 4200 members and is seeking compensation for survivors of the nuclear programme. After many years of research and the successful claims of French military personnel who served in Algeria and the Pacific, Moruroa e Tatou was allowed to take the first case to the industrial relations tribunal in Papeete.

This test case was made in the name of eight workers in April this year. Five of the workers had already died from radiation-related illnesses but were represented by their widows. The case was also supported by the Protestant Maohi Church and president Oscar Temaru who had worked on Moruroa. All were disappointed by the judge's verdict announced on June 26. Legislation not updated in 30 years did not specify the illnesses that the workers had developed. Some compensation for the children of one family was awarded in the judgement. The struggle for justice will continue.

"Lord, hear my voice!" Ps 130:2a



A Case Study

One of the plaintiffs in the case is Teraivetea Raymond Taha who was 16 when he started work as a labourer and mechanic on Moruroa in December 1965. He later worked as a security guard

with the Atomic Energy Commission on Moruroa.

He explains, "I left school at 12 years of age after my father died, as I had to help out the family. At the time, the Pacific Testing Centre needed a lot of workers. For most Maohi (Polynesians) like me who started work in those years, it was the first time we would have a job and money in our pocket."

He recalls the clean up operation after an atmospheric test in September 1966. "We had to pick up all the dead fish and clean up all the debris that littered the roads. The staff of the Radiological Safety Service were testing soil with their apparatus. They were all dressed in special outfits with gloves and a mask. We Maohi workers were just following on behind them, without any special gear to protect us. The bosses said, 'it's okay over there.' We were scared, but if we'd refused we would have been on the next plane back to Tahiti. We would have lost our jobs so we went ahead cleaning up without asking any questions."

Raymond's only daughter, Cinya, was born in 1980 with a malformed lung. She died a year later of complications. In 1994 he was diagnosed with leukemia and underwent two years of chemotherapy.

The eight former workers are asking for recognition of workplace illnesses caused by ionised radiation. Five of them are represented by their widows and three are very ill with cancers. These cases were deemed by the lawyer as most likely to succeed. Although nuclear test victims have won compensation in France, the case failed in a court decision announced in Papeete on June 26 NZ time, because French Polynesia's legislation defining what illnesses could be covered had not been updated

Two hours before the court opened church leaders, former workers and their families, president Oscar Temaru and many supporters joined in a two hour vigil of prayer and song. Moruroa e Tatou has been working on the case for eight years and sees this as test case for all affected workers. "In France 18 workers have been awarded big money, but I don't know why our laws aren't up-to-date. It is not the fault of Oscar Temaru (current president) but of Gaston Flosse," says John Doom. Gaston Flosse was president for nearly 20 years. "I am not happy at all. Nobody understands why this has happened. [However] the door is not really closed as we have been allowed to go inside," he added. Moruroa e Tatou will continue to work for justice for the workers.

(sources: John Doom, Moruroa e Tatou and *Moruroa: The Story isn't Over* by Nic McClellan, <http://newmatilda.com/2009/05/15/moruroa-story-isnt-over>)

Call to Worship

Latin American Psalm

The feet of the people of the world today tread the asphalt of the city's violent streets, but the hearts of the humble are stronger than cannons and bombs.



Peace for human beings will not come from outside, neither will it be built by means of nuclear weapons, nor will it come by agreements between governments.

Peace is present in the heart of the universe and everything is moving towards peace.

It will come as a new dawn to this abused and weary world.

It will come from the simple, the humble and the poor of the earth.

It will be announced by the voices of children, and the stirring music of the young.

Worship resources from *Imagine Peace, WCC 2008*
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/other-liturgical-resources/advent-resources/advent-resources-2008.html>

"The workers of Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls have already waited too long for compensation. It is a waiting game. If the French government hold out for long enough the claimants will die and they will not have to pay. One has to wonder if the colonial government deliberately planned for this."

John Doom, Secretary of Moruroa e Tatou and a World Council of Churches' president

Biblical Reflection

Lectionary readings for August 9, 2009:

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33

This text combines intrigue, murder, war, power politics and family conflict— a very human story that shows where peacemaking can start.

While outwardly David's centralized kingdom was very successful, internally there were rumblings, even within his own family. David's third son Absalom killed his oldest brother in retaliation for Amnon's rape of Tamar, Absalom's sister and Amnon's half sister. David sent Absalom into exile for three years. Later Absalom instigated a revolt in dissatisfied Judah that threatened to destabilise David's rule and the unity of the kingdom.

The text begins with David organising his troops to defend the kingdom. In v5 David asked the three military commanders to 'deal gently' with Absalom who was probably now the heir to the throne as there is no further mention of Chileab the second son. However events proved otherwise. David's troops won decisively and the death toll was 20,000 (v7).

In defeat Absalom escaped only to become entangled in a great oak tree. His mule continued walking and Absalom was 'left hanging between heaven and earth'. Finding him there and aware of David's command, the troops would not touch him (v12) but Joab, one of three military commanders and a key court official, took matters into his own hands. Joab thrust three spears into Absalom's heart and with the help of ten young men killed him (v14,15). Joab declared victory by sounding the trumpets (v16) before burying Absalom (v17).

Two messengers were dispatched to tell David. The first reports the victory in battle but only the second was brave enough to report on Absalom's death. David was distraught and in words that could be shared by millions of people who have lost loved ones in conflict, expressed his overwhelming anguish (v33).

Moruroa e Tatou gather in a ceremony to mark 43 years since the first nuclear test.

Psalm 130

This is one of the penitential psalms that expresses the longing for redemption and an end to suffering. It begins with a focus on individual concerns and moves in v7-8 to a collective response. Forgiveness can only be found in God.

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

It is not always easy to talk about the ethical implications of faith and the life choices we make. In this text the writer of Ephesians (probably an apostle of Paul) lays out clear guidelines for the Christian life which have some interesting twists. The advice not to 'tell falsehoods' (v25) or to let the sun go down on anger (v26) are not always followed. Interestingly thieves are told to work honestly so that they might share with the needy (v28). These injunctions provide a blueprint for peacemaking and show how to give life to communities in the deepest meaning of the word.

John 6: 35, 41-51

This text begins with the first of John's seven 'I am' statements and shows Jesus' fundamental concern for the most basic necessity of life. He asserts his role as a broker of God's life-giving bread. In Jesus' time bread provided 50% of the calories for the majority non-elite. The poor mostly ate bread made from barley which was easier to grow and required less water. It took three hours to grind enough barley for a family of five or six, a task undertaken by the women of the household.

Only some of the Jews present would have been followers of Jesus, so when he made what must have been a very political statement, others challenged his lineage (v41-2). Jesus carefully silences their criticism by saying he comes from God. By choosing to follow him, they will find the source of everlasting life.



Children's Time

For older children talk about nuclear testing on Moruroa and the rainbow as a symbol of peace. Tell the story of the little parrot: http://www.healingstory.org/treasure/little_parrot/brave_little_parrot.html Give each child a ribbon or piece of cloth in rainbow colours and ask them to decorate the worship space for peace.

Confession (adapted)

O God of peace, you knew us before we were formed in our mother's womb.

Forgive us when we have good intentions but do not commit ourselves

to concrete action for peace and justice.

Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

O God of justice, look upon our human race with mercy. Forgive us when we allow your image in us to be marred by remaining passive in the face of so much violence.

Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

O God of love, you have created humankind to be one great family.

Forgive our unwillingness to reconcile with others, our loved ones and our enemies.

Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

O God of grace, you have given us the gift of speech to be instruments for change.

Forgive us for the times when we have spoken too hastily without thinking of the consequences, or have remained silent out of fear or indifference.

Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

O God of life, you have placed us on this earth to tend and watch over it. Forgive us if we have failed to care for your world, to protect the earth, the home of our ancestors and of our descendants. Help us to promote life and seek peace.

Grant that our actions and our words may always promote peace.

Assurance of forgiveness

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

Take Action

Write a letter to the French ambassador (Mr Michel Legras, PO Box 11343, Wellington 6142) asking for justice for the victims of nuclear testing.

Raise funds for Moruroa e Tatou or the emergency appeals for Pakistan or Sri Lanka.



Peace Sunday Worship Resources 2009

Prayer for others

Music for **Señor** is at: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/other-liturgical-resources/advent-resources/advent-resources-2008.html>

Lord, we pray for

Peace for those who weep in silence

Peace for those who cannot speak

Peace when all hope seems to disappear.

Song: **Señor renueva tu paz en medio de tu pueblo** (*O God replenish your peace in the midst of all your people*)

In the midst of rage, of violence and disappointment,

In the midst of wars and destruction of the earth,

Lord, show us your light in the darkness.

Song: **Señor renueva tu paz en medio de tu pueblo**

Lord, we pray for

Peace for those who raise their voices to demand it,

Peace when there are many who do not wish to hear of it,

Peace as we find the way to justice.

Song: **Señor renueva tu paz en medio de tu pueblo**

Closing blessing

And now, people of faith, we go,

encouraged by the presence of the Lord,

inspired by God's Word,

strengthened by the lives of our brothers and sisters, visualizing signs of peace.

Amen.

In the coming week, look for signs of peace.

Resources

On the bombing of Nagasaki: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/9/newsid_3580000/3580143.stm

Stories of survivors, images and appeals for peace:

<http://www1.city.nagasaki.nagasaki.jp/peace/english/index.html>

You may like to join the International Day of Prayer for Peace on September 21, 2009 or support the launch of the Global March for Peace and Non-violence in Aotearoa New Zealand on October 2, 2009. For details and other resources check the website.



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